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UNITED STATES
ATOMIC ENERGY COMMISSION

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August 23, 1961

OFFICE OF THE CHAIRMAN

MEMORANDUM FOR FILE:

The purpose of this memorandum is to record some personal and tentative thoughts with respect to a plan for the announcement of a decision to resume nuclear weapons testing -- if the President should find it necessary to make this decision; and for the subsequent conduct of such tests, including seismic research and peaceful uses detonations using nuclear devices.

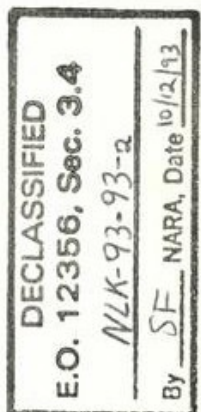
The object of the plan is to minimize adverse public reaction both at home and abroad, even though I believe the President has succeeded in shifting the burden of responsibility for the success or failure of the talks to the Soviets.

The plan is based on a premise: nuclear weapons testing is a defense activity and as such does not impose upon the President an obligation to disclose the actual conduct of specific individual tests. Rather, I believe the United States must have the choice to disclose or conceal defense activities, including nuclear weapons testing, depending upon whether disclosure is in the interest of our national security or inimical to it. While there may be practical reasons for the announcement of specific tests -- such as the need for international cooperation from seismic research stations throughout the world -- this is a matter of choice and not of duty.

I should also note that the plan deals not with the decision per se, whether or not to resume testing, but rather with the announcement of the intention to resume and the announcement of specific tests as they may be held.

I would assume that if the President decides to authorize the resumption of nuclear tests he would honor the commitment made by former President Eisenhower on December 29, 1959, that, "Although we consider ourselves free to resume nuclear weapons testing, we shall not resume nuclear weapons tests without announcing our intention in advance of any resumption."

However, I do not believe that there is a corresponding obligation to announce each individual test even though we might elect to do so under particular circumstances.



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If no progress is made with the Soviets following Mr. Dean's return to Geneva, or if other developments should urge a change in our present posture, the President might wish to pursue the following course. State publicly:

1. That the United States has exhausted all efforts to reach agreement with the Soviet Union on an adequately safeguarded nuclear test ban treaty;
2. That the United States is, accordingly, making preparations for the resumption of testing of nuclear weapons;
3. That the United States will conduct weapons tests whenever it finds that it is in our national interest to do so;
4. That such tests will be conducted in the underground where the explosion will be fully contained so that there need be no fear of radioactive fallout;
5. That the United States will also conduct nuclear seismic research detonations and peaceful uses explosions with nuclear devices;
6. That the conduct of nuclear weapons tests is a defense activity and that there will be no further announcement of the conduct of individual tests if disclosure would appear to be inimical to our national security; and
7. That even though the United States will now make the essential preparations for the conduct of nuclear weapons tests, and will conduct them at sometime in the future if it is in our national interest to do so, the United States, nevertheless, stands ready, as it has for the past three years, to enter into an adequately safeguarded treaty with the Soviet Union.

Thus, under the foregoing plan the policy decision with respect to the probable resumption of testing would be announced, but there would be no corresponding obligation to announce the conduct of individual tests.

No doubt the conduct of underground nuclear activity at Nevada would become known. It would be assumed that such activities

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involve nuclear weapons testing -- since under this plan the President would have announced our intention for probable resumption. It would not be known specifically whether such tests involved seismic research or peaceful uses explosives, or were actually nuclear weapons tests, or perhaps a combination of all three; the difficulty of knowing would be enhanced by the fact that all three categories could be used to give seismic information. Specific knowledge as to the category of nuclear explosion would be known only to a relatively small group of people on a need to know basis, each of whom would have the necessary security clearance carrying with it a statutory obligation to safeguard the information.

There would be considerable speculation at first, but with a consistent policy of "no comment" based on the principle that nuclear weapons tests are defense activities, curiosity should decline and nuclear tests activities should come to be accepted in the same category as other secret defense activities. This plan would require the special cooperation of nearby universities with seismic detection equipment, but this could be arranged possibly by means of specific contracts for participation in the seismic program.

Glenn T. Seaborg

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August 30, 1961

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Office of the White House Press Secretary

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THE WHITE HOUSE

The Soviet government's decision to resume nuclear weapons testing will be met with deepest concern and resentment throughout the world. The Soviet government's decision to resume nuclear weapons testing presents a hazard to every human being throughout the world by increasing the dangers of nuclear fallout. The Soviet government's decision to resume nuclear weapons testing is in utter disregard of the desire of mankind for a decrease in the arms race. The Soviet government's decision to resume nuclear weapons testing presents a threat to the entire world by increasing the dangers of a thermo-nuclear holocaust. The Soviet government's decision to resume nuclear weapons testing indicates the complete hypocrisy of its professions about general and complete disarmament.

For three years world attention has centered on the negotiations in Geneva for a treaty to secure an end to nuclear testing. Until last March it appeared that slow but encouraging progress had been made. At that time, the Soviet Union reversed its own earlier positions on key issues, refused to discuss seriously the genuine efforts made by the United States and the United Kingdom to meet known Soviet views, and blocked the path toward a nuclear test ban treaty. In order to avoid missing any possible opportunity to arrive at an agreement, the United States and the United Kingdom remained at the negotiating table. Only this week Ambassador Dean has made additional proposals in the hope of moving toward a test ban under effective international control. Urgent discussion of this issue had been scheduled at United States initiative at the forthcoming session of the General Assembly in the hopes that constructive debate could show the way to surmount the impasse at Geneva.

The pretext offered by the announcement for Soviet resumption of weapons testing is the very crisis which they themselves have created by threatening to disturb the peace which has existed in Germany and Berlin. It is not the first time they have made such charges against those who have dared to stand in the way of Soviet aggression. In addition, the announcement links the Soviet resumption of testing with threats of massive weapons which it must know cannot intimidate the rest of the world.

The purpose and motivation of this Soviet behavior now seems apparent: The Soviet Government wished to abandon serious negotiations in order to free its hand to resume nuclear weapons testing.

The United States continues to share the view of the people of the world as to the importance of an agreement to end nuclear weapons tests under effective safeguards. Such an agreement would represent a major breakthrough in the search for an end to the arms race. It would stop the accumulation of stock piles of ever more powerful weapons. It would inhibit the spread of nuclear weapons to other countries with its increased risks of nuclear war.

These results, with their prospects for reducing the possibility of a nuclear war, have been blocked by the Soviet unilateral decision to resume nuclear testing. The Soviet Union bears a heavy responsibility before all humanity for this decision, a decision which was made in complete disregard of the United Nations. The termination of the moratorium on nuclear testing by the Soviet unilateral decision leave the United States under the necessity of deciding what its own national interests require.

Under these circumstances, Ambassador Arthur Dean is being recalled immediately from Geneva.

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